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ABSTRACT

An on-going project of cross-referencing reprint and preprint series distributed by observatories to the collection of the National Radio Astronomy Observatory is described. Reprints available in the library's journal collection were removed after cross-indexing and referencing was accomplished. If the reprint was not available through the journal collection, it was kept and filed in the same folder as the annotated list of reprints, organized by observatory. The work varied with each observatory's publications--simple identification of reprints being kept and being removed for those observatories that published their own annotated list of reprints was easy; for those series where no indexes existed, annotated indexes had to be created. This procedure allows the library to maintain the intent of identifying a work with a particular institution, but at the same time allows for considerable space savings and simplification of the collection by keeping a particular article in only one location in the library. (Author/MBR)

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MANAGING REPRINTS AND PREPRINTS IN AN OBSERVATORY LIBRARY

by

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Observatories have relied on the exhange of reprints* for many years as both a way of publicizing their areas of research and also as a way of adding to the library collections non-reprint items available only on exchange. In the days when shelf space seemed unlimited and budgets likewise, little thought was given to the redundancy of having articles from major journals available in various locations throughout the collection. There was some justification for this, outside of the obvious "fleshing out" of a small collection. First, the Astronomischer Jahresbericht and its successor, Astronomy and Astrophysics Abstracts, to some extent have cited by the observatory reprint series as well as providing the journal reference. D. A. Kemp, in his guide to the literature, noted the importance of the inclusion of the reprint series citations whenever possible since there are many instances in which such articles are more likely to be available in reprint format than the original. However, even he noted in his preface the classic case of a paper that appeared in five different series and twice in report form (1). Secondly, many staff members tended to associate certain of their colleagues or particular types of research with a specific institution and therefore would "browse" in the exchange section for information. Thirdly, in some countries the practice of publishing in national rather than international journals meant that unless the observatory distributed reprints, much of its work might be unavailable outside of the home country. So, observatories distributed reprints and librarians dutifully collected, collated, bound

*For purposes of this discussion, "reprint" is used in the sense of a reproduction of an article originally published as part of a larger work, i.e. an offprint.

together, and shelved vast numbers of them.

The times, however, are a'changin'. Few observatory libraries have either unlimited shelf space or resources for the continued wholesale acquisition and maintenance of great hordes of reprints. Many observatories, because of increasing costs for both the reprints and postage, have either discontinued distribution entirely or now distribute lists from which one selects specific reprints. Some, with an eye to better serving the user, are substituting a preprint distribution for one of reprints. With publication delays of 9 to 12 months from submittal to appearance in the journal, preprints are becoming increasingly in demand by working astronomers. Preprints, of course, have been informally distributed among colleagues for years, but the new wave appears to be preprint series distributed on a formal basis to libraries.

The demise of many reprint series and the substitution of lists of reprints have left librarians, who like things neat and orderly, in a bit of a quandary: how does one close out a series that isn't <u>really</u> dead, but merely ailing? If one is now receiving only selected reprints or a list of available reprints from an institution, how does one deal with a quasi-dead series on a catalog card? Since all reprints are no longer available, what of shelving the little devils? Does one simply toss them into a Princeton file to slosh about or bind them with notes advising that certain numbers were not distributed?

The problems touched upon above were exacerbated in the NRAO libraries by the fact that we began acquiring these series in the 1950's and complete runs were seldom available. Then, in the mid-60's, the collection was split when the administrative offices and main library were moved from

Green Bank, West Virginia to Charlottesville, Virginia. Many observatories began sending copies of their series for both locations, but filling in back runs was even more difficult than it had been in the 50's. So, when the series started being cut back, the NRAO library was faced with quite a situation: numerous broken series, dwindling shelf space, and a rather messy looking exchange collection, spread over two libraries. The temptation to chuck them all was great, but knowing that they were being used on occasion and hating to lay waste the efforts that had been expended in the 50's and 60's to gather these reprints, a compromise was effected. Those reprints available in the library's journal collection would indeed be removed, but only after cross-indexing and referencing them to the journals, so that if a staff member went to the exchange collection, s/he would find a list of reprints from a particular observatory with the citations to the journal articles. If the journal is one not in the collection, the reprint is kept in the same folder or notebook as the annotated list. In some cases, this was extraordinarily easy, since the observatory in question had published its own index, complete with citations. With these, an asterisk was placed by the entry in the index for those reprints being kept because they had appeared in journals not in the collection. The indexes and the few retained reprints were then placed in a binder and shelved in the exchange section. For those observatories that published lists of their reprints without citations, the journal references were added and the process above carried out. For those series for which no indexes could be located, they were created. Although this last method involved considerably more work, it was felt that the savings in space and simplification of the collection was worth the effort. For

some reprint series, a combination of these methods was needed.

We have been forced in some instances to effect compromises unnecessary for a library with a larger staff and more time to devote to the project. In most cases, no attempt has been made to track down reprints that were never received, so many of the lists have gaps or begin at some point after number 1 of a series. In addition, bound volumes of reprints have not been destroyed. Our shelf problems are not in the desperation stage yet, so we have, as of now, left untouched the neat looking ones. In the future of course these too may go. Finally, if an institution seems to eventually produce its own list, one has not been created, so there are areas where there are a group of reprints that will be discarded eventually.

The procedure described above is for numbered series. Unnumbered reprints from observatories are handled slightly differently. Since it is unlikely that a user would have an institutional reference to an unnumbered reprint, all were removed from the exchange collection, with those from journals in the library being discarded. Reprints from journals not held are filed by first author in a vertical file in the Charlottesville library after a catalog card is made for the Green Bank library, with authors, title, and citation, so that staff and visitors there have access to this collection. (A note of explanation: although the libraries are separated by 120 miles, a daily shuttle between the two installations means the resources of either collection are available within 24 hours to any user.)

The proliferation of preprint series presents similar problems to those created by reprints. Herbert Coblans, in his book on the physics literature, refers to preprints as "that bastard progeny of priority

neurosis and reproductive technology" and considers them of little value to the scientific community (2). His opinion does not jibe with our experience in the NRAO library, for the preprint collection has always been one of the most active parts of our resources. At any one time, the library has 250 to 300 preprints, about half of which represent NRAO papers by staff and visitors, with the remainder made up of papers sent to staff members and preprint series received from other observatories. Although great strides have been made in some subject areas for dealing with preprints, most notably the "Preprints in Particles and Fields" and the "Anti-preprint" lists produced by the Stanford Linear Accelerator Center Library, no similar service is currently available in astronomy and astrophysics. Simply tossing out the preprint after a period of time or its appearance in print was considered, but the increasing frequency of questions like "there was a preprint here by so and so from such and such a place, what happened to it?" indicated that the series were being used and remembered as series. Therefore, for formal preprint series, a system was initiated similar to that used for reprints. Upon receipt of a preprint, the authors and titles are added to a list maintained in the exchange collection and the preprints themselves are displayed on A-frames in another section of the library. On publication, the citation is added to the list and the preprint discarded, unless it appeared in a journal to which we don't subscribe, in which case the preprint is kept after publication with the list.

Both of these listing activities have definite advantages to an institutional library in multiple locations (the NRAO now has five collections in four states). Since all of the series are not received in all locations, we are still able to give access to them by simply photocopying the lists

and distributing as needed by staff and visitors. Although at present complete lists are maintained only in Charlottesville and Green Bank, this can be expanded as the need spreads with a minimum of effort.

Finally, we turn back to the earlier question of how to catalog a series that may no longer be a real series. The substitution of the lists for the actual reprints reduces the question to the simpliest level: all of the on-going series, whether on-going literally or by distribution of a list of numbered reprints, are simply cataloged under institution name with the bracketed note "list only" where applicable following the entry. This method obviates the need for a long explanation that "automatic distribution ceased after number whatever, lists received thereafter", but at the same time lets the user know that the library receives something from the institution in question.

The shelf savings resulting from this activity to date have been in the neighborhood of 15 to 20% for both libraries involved, but even beyond that, the simplification of the collection maintenance has been a most useful byproduct. Scanning a list for a particular paper is much more satisfactory than shuffling through several hundred reprints and the knowledge that we are using all of our limited space efficiently is gratifying.

Literature Cited

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2. Coblans, Herbert, ed. / Use of Physics Literature. London, Butterworths, 1975. 290p.

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